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There Is Only One Answer...

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There Is Only One Answer

IN NOVEMBER we celebrated the twenty-sixth anniversary of a historic moment in the long life-history of the Jewish people. We celebrated the historic acknowledgment by the world's greatest imperium that the Jews are a nation; the historic expression of intention to provide them with a homeland in the country of their national origins. Let us here discuss what Winston Churchill once called the "solemn undertaking" of the British Government to accomplish this purpose.

Palestine is not, nor ever was, "British." It is not a British colony or possession. It was mandated for administration to Britain by the League of Nations, following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, of which it was a part. That Britain intended in Palestine to provide the first constructive solution in centuries to what both the Jewish and the Christian world acknowledged as a Jewish problem, lent the most powerful interest to the mandate.

But from the very beginning the trouble was that Britain was committed to two seemingly contradictory policies and promises. The one had been given to the Jews, the other to the Arabs, during the period when Britain was encouraging them to revolt from the yoke of the Sultan. Both promises were, therefore, given partly in exchange for services rendered to Britain against the Ottoman Empire in the last war. But both were also political decisions, and both were attempts to fulfill just and reasonable national ambitions of two peoples, without prejudice to the ambitions and interests of the British Empire itself.

The promise to the Jews was that there should be established in their historic birthplace "a *national home* for the Jewish *people*, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which prejudices the *civil* and *religious* rights of *existing non-Jewish communities* in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Seldom, in so few words, has a policy been more clearly and unmistakably expressed.

It was not suggested that Palestine should be opened as a refuge for the persecuted; it was not suggested that immigration should be encouraged and

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provided for, as it might be, for instance, to other sparsely populated places, such as Uruguay. Palestine was to be a *national* home, that is to say, the home of the Jewish *nation*. Acknowledging that it was a country also populated by Arabs, the promise was given to protect the rights of the *existing* Arab and other *communities*. In the one case the Jewish *nation* was acknowledged; in the other, the non-Jewish *communities*. Nothing was said about *future* Arab communities. Nothing was said about an Arab *nation* in Palestine. So, if the English language can be trusted in one of its most precise expressions, the promise meant: Jewry may erect in Palestine a national state, but must grant, in that state, equal rights to those Arabs who are already settled there.

The promise given to the Arabian world was that they would be encouraged to create an independent and sovereign Arabian nation, after they had been freed from Turkish subjection.

How the Promises Have Been Kept

Now, after a quarter of a century, both promises have been partly kept; neither promise has been fulfilled.

The promise to the Arabs was much the larger promise, and the one more difficult of fulfillment. It involved vast territories, variously governed—Saudi-Arabia, Hedjaz, Syria, and Iraq.

The development of these areas or countries was not identical. Saudi-Arabia became a quasi-independent state. Iraq became, first, a British mandate, and then a nearly sovereign state. Transjordan remained an Arab state under British mandate after being partitioned from Palestine. All were kept strictly within the British sphere of influence, so that to call any one of them independent, in respect especially of foreign relations, is an error.

Syria, on the other hand, became a French mandate and virtually a French colony, though promised eventual independence, certainly with the tacit reservation that it would remain in the French sphere of influence.

In all developments the British interest played, and naturally, a dominant role. The British needed, they thought, supervision and control over the whole area under their mandate for strategic and economic reasons. Strategically, the area covers the communication lines to India. Economically, it is rich in oil. And, politically, the British had to take into consideration the large Moslem

populations in their other colonies, who sympathized with Arab national aspirations, and were able, in the ever-unstable colonial world, to create considerable trouble in times of crisis. In India, for instance, there were ninety million Moslem Indians who had repeatedly formed the backbone of British Far Eastern armies in the past, as in this war, and who, in the minds of those charged with British colonial affairs, could be, and have been, used to counterbalance the Hindus. Egypt constituted another vast Moslem bloc. Egypt's status hovers, also, between sovereignty and colonialism. Egypt is sovereign to the degree that she has not even entered this war, but she holds her sovereignty on the tacit but very real condition that no non-British or anti-British power may use her as a base of operations, in case of war, while the British and their allies may.

If we look, therefore, at the largest aspects of the British problem in the Moslem world, where do the Jews come in?

In grand policy, it is clear that the Jews are being used, on the one hand, to counterbalance too-strong Arab aspirations, threatening the power structure of the British in the Middle East, and with repercussions upon the British position in the Far East. The Jews have been used as a diversion. The Arabs, instead of directing their struggle against the British Empire—an eventuality which I should, with the British, strongly regret—have been diverted against the Jews in Palestine. This has given the British the role of mediators, the power to divide and rule. When the Palestinian Arabs, spurred on by nationalist agitators, revolted against the Jews, the Jews were protected by the British. When the Jews asked for increased immigration, the British sided with the Arabs.

In this situation neither Jew nor Arab can achieve their aspirations. The Axis powers, who, under anti-imperialist slogans, have sought to intervene against the British in this area, have followed exactly the same tactics. Their own intentions being totally imperialistic, they have posed as protectors of the Arabs against both the British and the Jews.

This is, in very condensed form, the history, as I see it, of what has happened to the Balfour Declaration. The mandatory power has considered chiefly its own interest, and I see no reason to hope that any such mandatory power, in any future, is likely to do anything else.

Consequently, both Arabs and Jews have tried to persuade the mandatory power that British interests coincide with their own.

The Jews have a very good case in such attempts at persuasion. They argue, and can certainly prove, that the loyalty of the Arabs has been, to say the least, dubious in this war, and that if the whole of Palestine had been settled by Jews, their military value would have been of the greatest importance for Britain and the United Nations. They further argue that the economic value of Palestine has been improved by Jewish labor and capital above the value of any other mandate. This also is indisputable.

The Arab princes, on the other hand, are sending emissaries abroad to prove that the Arab world can offer new and larger opportunities than the Palestinian Jews ever can, and that is also true, providing the Arabian world could deliver. And the Arabs, unlike the Jews, can hold over the British a real threat to the Empire. The Axis world would certainly offer the Jews nothing—nothing but extermination. The Axis world has offered the Arabs everything. The Axis world would keep its promise to the Jews. It would never keep its promise to the Arabs. But promises are sweet, in any case.

The Solution for the Arab-Jewish Problem

Now, I am forced honestly to say to you that I see no solution to this problem in the present pattern of colonial power and of League of Nations so-called mandates. A genuine League of Nations, which would regard the political education and the economic development of all politically and economically backward areas as the mutual task of mankind, to be carried out for the primary benefit of the areas in question, and for the mutual benefit of mankind, under the protection of a common protective system, and in preparation for the time when all nations and peoples might enter it, is the *only* eventual solution for *either* the Arab or the Jewish homeland problem, or both. None of these problems can be solved within the triangle of Jews-Arabs-British Empire. None of them can be solved except in the framework of a new world system. I say this with malice toward none, and least of all toward the British, for Britain has her own problems, of tremendous magnitude—problems which this war will not solve, and problems which require tremendous vision and immense capacity for adaptation if the structure which Britain has built through the centuries, and which for much more than a century has constituted the only integrating and

stabilizing force on a world-wide scale, is not to fall apart, atomizing and setting adrift uncontrollable forces.

Palestine is a very small part of the whole Middle Eastern complex and Arab world. Its loss for the Arabs would be negligible if they could really exchange it for their own security and opportunity for national development. And it could highly contribute to an economic and social regeneration and re-creation of the Middle East, once the center of civilization, fallen back, then, through centuries of corrupt and dismal foreign rule and exploitation.

In my opinion, the first and minimum step toward disentanglement must be a clear-cut division of the political spheres of sovereignty of Jews and Arabs. In my opinion, that division was clearly implied in the Balfour Declaration. But, implied or not, it is obvious in practical politics that it is essential. Until that is done there *can* be nothing but strife, with the British continually mediating between contending interests. Until it is clear that here the Arab world stops and the Jewish world begins, there will be neither a Jewish nor an Arabian sovereignty anywhere in the Middle East, but only a British, *de facto*, if not *de jure*.

Now, to pretend that the British Empire, or, better, the United Nations, or even the Anglo-American powers alone cannot do this, is preposterous. They are taking over tremendous responsibilities, such as, for instance, to police and protect the globe against aggressive wars. To admit that, after this war, in which they will be victorious over all existing powerful enemies, they cannot draw a frontier and say: "Beyond this is Jewish—beyond that is Arab," is simply to admit that they cannot draw any frontiers or, indeed, deal with the colonial problem at all. The tactics of playing off one people against another and vice versa, and holding the balance, has not worked at all well since war flamed in the Far East, and it will never again achieve any stability anywhere. The most careful decisions must be made, and then these decisions must be adhered to, if the European peoples are to retain a vestige of prestige in the non-European areas of the earth.

And you cannot reverse history, either, without being guilty of the utmost frivolity, a crime for which history seldom knows forgiveness.

The Balfour Declaration and the mandating of Palestine to the British started an enterprise, and into this enterprise has been poured a fortune in

money, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and a whole world of hope. The question is no longer whether there should be a Jewish home and a Jewish nation in Palestine. There *is* one. It exists. It is a reality. For this, tens of thousands of teachers and students have unburied the language of the Bible and Talmud, exhumed it from the dust of antique books, and made it a living, spoken tongue. For this, tens of thousands of youths from the ghettos of Europe have broken their backs upon the stones of Palestinian roads, and under its burning skies lifted their songs. For this, colonies have been founded and governed in the very spirit of the Mosaic law, translating the ethics of an ancient religion into a modern cooperative economy. For this, the desert has been made "to blossom like the rose," and for this, the wasteland has become again a "land flowing with milk and honey." The question: "Shall there be a Jewish nation in a Jewish homeland?" has been asked and answered already. So let us be ruthlessly clear in our minds that this question is not to be raised again. It cannot be raised. The question now is not: "Shall there be a Jewish homeland?" The question is: "Shall the existing Jewish homeland be allowed to grow and thrive, or shall the existing Jewish homeland be destroyed?" It can be destroyed, of course, in one of two ways. It can be blotted out, as the Polish ghetto was blotted out by the Gestapo, or it can be allowed to die a lingering death.

As a lover and admirer of the greatness of Britain, I do not want to see her behave like a spoiled and whimsical old woman. Britain has greatly contributed to set into motion a chain of events. She cannot keep on changing her mind and intriguing that her own policies should come to nothing. For, if she does, one of these days the world will say, "The old lady is cracking up. Too bad, but perhaps it is just as well." No one in this country less desires to see this happen than I.

The Nationhood of the Jews

It is deeply to be regretted that, in this truly heroic struggle to re-create the Jewish nation, the Jewish communities in all countries are not united. It is curious, to me, that the nationhood of the Jews should be denied by Jews themselves. It is un-understandable to me that, with their people hounded and persecuted through so large a portion of Christendom in a recrudescence of anti-Jewish feeling that recalls the Middle Ages, many Jews should still deny that there is

a "Jewish problem"—a Jewish problem for both the Jews and the non-Jews. I have even encountered Jews among my own acquaintanceship who maintain that to acknowledge that there is a Jewish problem is in itself an expression of anti-Semitism. This flight into illusion is understandable among a people whose sufferings have, in this epoch, been so hideous that they prefer to avert their eyes. Yet self-imposed blindness is not the means of finding the path to light.

The problems of the Jews are, to my mind, all traceable to a single phenomenon: They are a nation curiously afflicted by being without the tangible and visible expression of nationhood—a nation without a country. Out of this fact arises the nameless fear that lies at the roots of anti-Semitism. The Jewish story is a ghost story, and therefore full of bogey-men. It haunts the mythology of primitive-minded Christians. What, to the average man, can be more awful than to be "A Man Without a Country"? If the Jews are a people without a country, doomed to wander the face of the earth, must that not be a punishment for some dreadful sin? Did not the Jews of the Sanhedrin crucify Christ? For that they are punished through endless time! So runs the myth, nor stops to think that Jesus of Nazareth was born in the very womb of Jewry, descendant of the great religious and philosophical line of Amos and Isaiah; nor that the Roman governors, who also understood how to divide and rule, sacrificed a dangerous Jew—in their terminology—to another set of Jews, and all for the glory and interest of Rome.

But the myth exists, and nothing is more difficult to eradicate than a myth. It does not yield to reason, for it stands outside of reason, in the sub-conscious and unreachable regions of primitive emotions.

It is said, "But the Jews are no nation"—said by Jews. What, then, are they? Why do those who deny their nationhood call themselves Jews? We are, they say, a religion. But of what is that religion the expression? Can any Jew who celebrates the festivals and rituals of his religion deny that his is the religion of a specific people, whose ethos, practices, prohibitions, and laws have grown out of a specific and unique experience? Judaism is the religion of the Jews. That is its very name! It does not call itself "Mosaicism," as "Christianity" calls itself by the exalted name of its founder. What are a people if they are not a nation? They are a minority deprived of nationhood. What does a

minority deprived of nationhood do? It attempts to retain its cohesion through inner-group controls, or it passes entirely out of history. No nation, not one, has shown such remarkable tenure of life under the most disadvantageous of circumstances as have the Jews. Where are the contemporaries of the childhood of this nation? Is there an American Babylonian Congress in New York? Or an American Babylonian Committee, asserting that they are not Babylonians? Is there an American Phoenician League? Is there a Chaldean Association? These peoples and nations have passed. They have assimilated or have been assimilated. Why have not the Jews passed?

And there is only one answer, only one conceivable answer, unless one is to accept the bogey-man myth of the religious anti-Semites, that God kept them alive on this earth to furnish a horrible example of original sin. They are alive today because they remembered Zion. From the time when, by the waters of long-extinct Babylon, they sat down and wept, yea, hung their harps upon the willow and wept because they remembered Zion, they have remembered, and remembered without a break. Remembered through the Spanish Inquisition, remembered through the ghettos of the Middle Ages, remembered through the pogroms of Tsarist Russia, remembered through the inquisition and the new ghettos of Nazi Germany. They have remembered on every Sabbath in their synagogues, and remembered in their festivals. And how any Jew can divorce his religion from his nationhood is beyond my powers of comprehension.

The Jewish State and the Jews Outside It

The fear exists that the recognition of this nationhood will prejudice the status of Jews as citizens of other countries. I hold that to be an exact perversion of the real situation. All people change their citizenship and nationhood, as individuals, from time to time. This country is wholly composed of persons who have done so. They have naturalized themselves from their own nation to another. The Jews, on the contrary, naturalize themselves from no nation of their own to any other. Hence, in the non-Jewish mind, they must carry their nation with them, no matter where they go. And in a very real sense this is true. My father, as I have said before in illustration of what I mean, was born an Englishman; my great-grandmother was a French woman. My father became an American, transferring his entire loyalties from one nation to another. But

he left his own nation behind him. He was not wrecking it by leaving it. The problem of Jewish assimilation will, to my mind, disappear with great rapidity when the life of the Jewish people as a whole is normalized to the life of every other people. The Jewish people do not need a country capable of receiving all the Jews on the face of the earth. There happen to be more Irishmen in this country than there are in Ireland. No one doubts their rights as Americans, but no one finds the slightest discrepancy between this and the right of a free Ireland to exist.

I speak as a Christian who dreams an ancient Jewish and Christian dream: that the nations of man may one day be gathered into a single fold, as free men and free nations of men, acknowledging the sovereignty above them all of a single law under God. I conceive the world of the future, if we are not all to perish at each other's hands, as a hierarchical structure, a House of Many Mansions, in which all will be securely at home, as individuals, as persons, as families, as nations. Each nation will have its own room in that house, and its own garden to tend as it will, only provided that it does not abuse the earth and its resources. People will be free to move about in that house, and change their rooms as suits them and the other tenants. But before that can come about, everyone must have the status of a room. There must be no people who have no room of their own at all.

I know there is room on this earth for everybody. And I know that those who hog rooms that they cannot or will not keep clean, and gardens that they cannot or will not cultivate, will lose them eventually to those who will and can. For such is the justice of history.

In the words of the great European nationalist and internationalist, Mazzini: I love my country because I love the idea of country. What I covet for myself, I covet for all other men. Because I demand and insist upon a spot on this earth where my race and my people, my culture and my nation, recognize themselves and are recognized as sovereign and at home, I demand and insist upon the rights of all others to the same.

